

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 4 TEL AVIV 2496

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IS
SUBJ: THE WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS AND WORLD JEWRY

REFS: A. TEL AVIV 1370, B. TEL AVIV 1672 (BOTH NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: THE 29TH WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS IN JERUSALEM
BRINGS TOGETHER NOT ONLY ALL ZIONIST ORGANIZATIONS AND
ISRAEL'S POLITICAL PARTIES, BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME
ALSO THE RELIGIOUS MAINSTREAMS OF WORLD JUDIASM. WITH
62 PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES FROM ABROAD AND WITH NEARLY
ALL PROMINENT JEWISH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE DIASPORA
PRESENT, THIS WILL BE A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION OF INTER-
NATIONAL JEWISH SOLIDARITY. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE
CONGRESS IS ENHANCED BY THE FACT THAT CONTROL OF THE
WORLD ZIONIST MOVEMENT HAS SHIFTED FROM LABOR TO
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LIKUD AND BY THE COINCIDENCE OF THE CONGRESS WITH
A CRUCIAL PHASE IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.
IN ADDITION TO THE POLITICAL QUESTIONS OVER THE
APPOITIONMENT OF LEADING POSITIONS IN THE WORLD ZIONIST
ORGANIZATION AND THE JEWISH AGENCY, OTHER MAJOR
QUESTIONS WHICH WILL ARISE DURING THE CONGRESS WILL
BE THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE JEWISH LEADERSHIP OF THE

DIASPORA AND OF ISRAEL, THE USES WHICH BOTH TRY TO MAKE OF EACH OTHER, THE PROPRIETY OF FOREIGN JEWISH LEADERS MEETING WITH ARAB REPRESENTATIVES, THEIR SEEKING TO INFLUENCE ISRAELI POLICY, AND THE POLICY OF PROMOTING MORE IMMIGRATION AS A MEANS OF ASSURING THE SURVIVAL OF ISRAEL. THE GOVERNMENT WILL SEE THE CONGRESS TO TRY TO SHORE UP ITS DECLINING NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE. AT THE SAME TIME, ISRAELI POLITICAL TENSIONS, ESPECIALLY WITHIN LIKUD, WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A POSSIBLE SPLIT-UP OF THE JEWISH AGENCY AND THE WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION. END SUMMARY

2. THE 29TH QUADRENNIAL WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS IS BEING HELD IN JERUSALEM FEBRUARY 20-28, NEARLY TWO YEARS LATE DUE TO LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES OVER ELECTION PROCEDURES. THE CONGRESS IN ITS 80TH YEAR IS MEETING AT AN ANXIOUS AND CRUCIAL TIME FOR ISRAEL. THE COUNTRY FACES A DECISIVE PHASE IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH WILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN DETERMINING THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE; AT THE SAME TIME THE PRESTIGE AND MORALE OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE DECLINING BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. THUS, IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS CONGRESSES WHICH WERE LITTLE MORE THAN PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS OF JEWISH SOLIDARITY, THIS ONE IS LIKELY TO BECOME A MORE SIGNIFICANT EVENT THROUGHWHICH ISRAEL'S LEADERSHIP

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WILL ALSO SEEK TO SHORE UP ITS PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY.

3. THE 1978 CONGRESS TAKES PLACE IN THE SAME YEAR AS ISRAEL'S THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY, IT IS THE FIRST TO BE HOSTED BY A LIKUD GOVERNMENT, AND IT IS ALSO THE FIRST IN WHICH THE DOMINANT POLITICAL FORCE WITHIN THE WORLD ZIONIST MOVEMENT HAS SHIFTED FROM LABOR TO LIKUD; FOR THESE REASONS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL SEEK TO TURN THE CONGRESS NOT ONLY INTO A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION OF JEWISH SOLIDARITY BUT ALSO INTO AN ENDORSEMENT OF LIKUD'S NON-SOCIALIST BRAND OF ZIONISM. THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP IS LOBBYING AMONG THE FOREIGN DELEGATES TO EXPLAIN ITS VIEWS ON DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND TO SEEK POLITICAL AND MATERIAL SUPPORT. THESE EFFORTS ARE OFTEN REINFORCED BY A DOOMSDAY SCENARIO WHICH DESCRIBES THE SITUATION IF JEWISH SOLIDARITY FAILS AND IF ISRAEL IS UNABLE TO ACT FROM STRENGTH IN NEGOTIATING ITS FUTURE. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, WHO SEES HIMSELF NOT ONLY AS THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL, BUT ALSO AS THE VOICE AND CONSCIENCE OF WORLD JUDIASM, WILL ADDRESS THE CONGRESS AT ITS CLOSING SESSION.

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4. THE MAIN THEME OF THE CONGRESS IS THE REVITALIZA-
TION OF ZIONISM. THIS IS COMBINED WITH A CALL TO THE
JEWISH PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO DEDICATE THEMSELVES
THROUGH ZIONISM TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE NATION, THE
FAITH, AND THE COMMUNITY.
THIS DEDICATION SHOULD SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE
IMMIGRATION TO ISRAEL OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES AND
PROMOTE JEWISH EDUCATION, REINFORCE JEWISH CONSCIOUS-
NESS, AND LEAD TO MORE ACTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS.
THOSE IN THE WEST ARE WARNED THAT ANTI-SEMITISM IS NOT
DEAD, AS REFLECTED IN THE UN RESOLUTION EQUATING
ZIONISM AND RACISM, AND UNLESS THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES
ABORAD COMMIT THEMSELVES MORE DIRECTLY TO THE STRENGTHEN-
ING OF ISRAEL, THEY MAY NOT FIND A SHELTER WHEN THEY
THEMSELVES BECOME THREATENED.

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5. ALTHOUGH A CONSIDERABLE EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO PRESENT AN OUTWARD PICTURE OF JEWISH SOLIDARITY, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES TO BE RESOLVED IN THE COURSE OF THE CONGRESS PROCEEDINGS. THESE INCLUDE ANXIETIES AND DIVISIONS OVER PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, THE FUTURE OF THE JEWISH AGENCY, AND THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT IN THE DIASPORA. THE MORE NATIONALIST ISRAELI GROUPS ARE ALREADY POINTING AN ACCUSATORY FINGER AT THE JEWISH LEADERS FROM ABROAD, CHARGING THAT THEY ARE NOT DOING ENOUGH AND THAT UNLESS THEY COME TO ISRAEL AND RISK THEIR OWN LIVES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE COUNTRY'S SURVIVAL THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO ASSERT THEMSELVES IN ISRAEL'S CONDUCT OF ITS FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THESE CONTROVERSIES ARE COMPOUNDED BY THE ONGOING STRUGGLE OVER THE FILLING OF KEY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS WHICH IS ALREADY EXACERBATING TENSIONS AMONG THE VARIOUS POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS, BUT MOST NOTABLY BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND HERUT WINGS OF THE LIKUD (SEE PARA 8).

6. EVEN AS THE CONGRESS OPENED THE FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF SEATS AND THE ELIGIBILITY OF SOME CANDIDATES FOR THE WORLD ZIONIST ORGANIZATION (WZO)-JEWISH AGENCY (JA) EXECUTIVE REMAINED UNRESOLVED. THE CONGRESS IS BEING ATTENDED BY 560 DELEGATES REPRESENTING THE VARIOUS ZIONIST ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING MOST ISRAELI POLITICAL PARTIES AND INTERNATIONAL GROUPS LINKED TO THESE PARTIES. IN ADDITION, 85 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MAJOR JEWISH RELIGIOUS GROUPS (ORTHODOX, CONSERVATIVE, AND REFORM) WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME ENJOY PARTIAL VOTING RIGHTS, BUT NOT THE RIGHT TO NOMINATE AND ELECT CANDIDATES TO THE EXECUTIVE.

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(IN ADDITION, SOME 31 IMMIGRANT ASSOCIATIONS ARE ALSO DEMANDING THE RIGHT TO FULL REPRESENTATION.) NEARLY TWO-THIRDS OF THE DELEGATES ARE FROM ABROAD, INCLUDING 152 FROM THE US. ABOUT 1100 GUESTS AND OBSERVERS, MOSTLY FROM ABROAD, ARE ALSO ATTENDING. IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE CONGRESS THE VARIOUS ZIONIST MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES AFFILIATED WITH THE WZO PLUS THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS, THE WORLD SEPHARDIC FEDERATION AND KEY JEWISH LEADERS FROM ABROAD, NOT ALL OF THEM REPRESENTING ZIONIST ORGANIZATIONS, CONVENED IN JERUSALEM. THEY DISCUSSED CONGRESS ISSUES AND CANDIDATES FOR THE WZO-JA EXECUTIVE AND MET WITH KEY ISRAELI LEADERS, THUS ASSURING THROUGH A MASSIVE INTERNATIONAL JEWISH PRESENCE CON-

SIDERABLE LOCAL AND WORLD-WIDE MEDIA ATTENTION.

7. WITH A FEW SEATS STILL CONTESTED, THE PROVISIONAL BREAKDOWN OF DELEGATES IS 174 (31 PERCENT) FOR LIKUD, 105 DELEGATES FOR THE GENERAL ZIONIST CONFEDERATION (NON-PARTY, INCLUDING HADASSAH), AND 95 DELEGATES FOR THE LABOR ALIGNMENT, WITH THE REMAINDER GOING TO THE MIZRACHI RELIGIOUS GROUP, THE DMC, WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS, THE SEPHARDIC FEDERATION, ETC. ALTHOUGH LIKUD GAINED SUBSTANTIALLY FROM ITS 130 DELEGATES AT THE LAST CONGRESS IN 1972, IT LACKS A MAJORITY AND THUS MUST RELY ON ARRANGEMENTS WITH OTHER PARTIES TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE FILLING OF THE 18 WZO-JA EXECUTIVE SEATS, WITH THE MOST CRUCIAL BEING THE JA TREASURY, IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION, YOUTH ALIYA, AND SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENTS.

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IM NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE DISTRIBUTION OF THESE SEATS HAVE BEEN COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT IN THE ISRAELI LIKUD PARTY THE HERUT WING HAS A MAJORITY WHERE- AS ABROAD HERUT REMAINS A RELATIVELY SMALL MINORITY. THUS THE HERUT FACTION HAS ONLY 85 OF THE 174 DELEGATES OR

SLIGHTLY LESS THAN HALF THE LIKUD DELEGATION. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF ITS STRENGTH IN ISRAEL AND BECAUSE OF ITS SENSE OF HAVING BEEN NEGLECTED IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF KEY CABINET AND OTHER POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS FOLLOWING THE LIKUD VICTORY IN ISRAEL, IT NOW DEMANDS KEY WZO-JA PORTFOLIOS AND HALF THE SIX LIKUD EXECUTIVE SEATS. BEGIN HIMSELF IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PERSONAL PRESSURE TO RESOLVE THIS CONFLICT, WHICH HAS IMPLICATIONS NOT ONLY FOR THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND HERUT FACTIONS, BUT ALSO FOR THE FUTURE OF THE JA AND SUBSTANTIAL INTERESTS OF JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS ABROAD, ESPECIALLY IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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9. ARYE DULZIN WAS ELECTED AS WZO PRESIDENT AND JA CHAIRMAN ON FEBRUARY 22, BUT AT THIS STAGE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SITUATION REMAIN UNCERTAIN. THE ALIGNMENT, DESPITE ITS LOSS OF SEATS (DOWN FROM 161 IN 1972), EXERCISES CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE BY VOTING WITH THE GENERAL ZIONIST CONFEDERATION; THESE TWO GROUPS HAVE A VOTING BLOC GREATER THAN THAT OF THE LIKUD WHEN THEY VOTE TOGETHER, DULZIN HAD, THEREFORE, REACHED AN INFORMAL AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL LABOR PARTY CHAIRMAN PERES THAT IN RETURN FOR LABOR'S WITHDRAWAL OF A CANDIDATE FOR THE WZO-JA CHAIRMANSHIP, THE ALIGNMENT WOULD BE ASSIGNED THREE KEY EXECUTIVE POSTS, AND PARTICULARLY THE TREASURY AND THE SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENT.

10. AT THE LAST MOMENT, HOWEVER, HERUT IS CHALLENGING THIS ARRANGEMENT AND DEMANDS BEGIN'S INTERVENTION TO ENSURE THAT BOTH THESE DEPARTMENTS GO TO HERUT. THIS FIGHT IS TAKING PLACE AGAINST THE STILL UNRESOLVED QUESTION OF EITHER IMPLEMENTING THE HOREV REPORT OR MAINTAINING THE MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION HEADED BY DAVID LEVY (HERUT-LIKUD). HERUT HAS SERVED A VIRTUAL ULTIMATUM ON BEGIN, INSISTING NOT ONLY ON RETAINING LEVY'S MINISTRY--WHICH SEEMS NOW VIRTUALLY ASSURED--BUT ALSO THAT THE JA TREASURY GO TO DEPUTY MINISTER YORAM ARIDOR AND THE IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION DEPARTMENT TO TEL AVIV LAWYER RAPHAEL KOTLOWITZ, CHAIRMAN OF THE WORLD EXECUTIVE OF THE HERUT-HAZOHAR MOVEMENT.

11. DULZIN AND THE LIBERALS HAVE DECLARED THAT BOTH ON PERSONALITY AND COMPETENCE GROUNDS THESE TWO MEN

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ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE. MOREOVER, MOST AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS ARE REPORTEDLY ALSO OPPOSED TO GIVING EITHER THE TREASURY OR THE IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION DEPARTMENTS TO HERUT. THIS THE MORE SO, SINCE THEY ARE REPORTEDLY ALREADY RESIGNED TO MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO WITH REGARD TO THE MINISTRY OF IMMIGRATION-ABSORPTION AND AN INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HOREV REPORT (SEE REFTELS). THEY SEE IN THE PLACEMENT OF HERUT CANDIDATES IN THESE VITAL POSITIONS OF THE JA A DANGER THAT THIS WOULD LEAD TO AN EROSION OF THE FUNCTION AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AGENCY AND OF THE VARIOUS JEWISH ORGANIZATIONAL AND FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES ABROAD.

12. VARIOUS REPORTS OF PRE-CONGRESS MOVES INDICATE HOW BEGIN APPEARS TO BE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE ROCK AND THE HARD PLACE, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO KOTLOWITZ. HE REPORTEDLY IS PLEADING WITH MAX FISHER TO PERSUADE THE AMERICAN DELEGATES TO ACCEPT THE KOTLOWITZ APPOINTMENT, BRANDISHING THE POSSIBILITY OF MAKING FISHER HIS CHOSEN SPOKESMAN FOR AMERICAN JEWRY, IF HE ACQUIESCES. SOME HERUT LEADERS IN RESPONSE HAVE THREATENED TO REVEAL THAT FISHER HAS NOT FULLY COMPLIED WITH HIS UJA PLEDGES, BUT HAS CONSISTENTLY GIVEN MORE MONEY TO THE REPUBLICAN PARTY THAN TO ZIONIST CAUSES. BEGIN HAS ALSO APPEALED TO RABBI SCHINDLER FOR SUPPORT AND HAS ALLEGEDLY OFFERED TO INTER- VENE WITH AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS TO HAVE THE ELECTION OF A SUCCESSOR TO SCHINDLER AS CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANIZATION OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS DELAYED FROM MARCH TO OCTOBER IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE PRESENT RELATIONS BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY. ACCORDING TO JA SOURCES, FISHER MAY GIVE IN TO BEGIN'S PRESSURE, SINCE WITHOUT THE PRIME MINISTER'S SUPPORT HE WOULD HAVE LITTLE BASIS FOR MAINTAINING HIS LEADING POSITION IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH HIERARCHY. BEGIN IS ALSO CALLING ON OTHER
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AMERICAN AND JEWISH LEADERS TO ACCEPT A GREATER ROLE FOR HERUT. HOWEVER, JA OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED TO US THEIR CONCERN THAT BEGIN MAY HAVE HELD OFF TOO LONG FROM INTERVENING IN THESE CONTROVERSIES. THE BITTERNESS OF THE INTERNAL INFIGHTING APPEARS TO HAVE REACHED SUCH A LEVEL THAT WHATEVER HE TRIES TO DO MAY ONLY SERVE TO FAN FURTHER THE INTERNAL TENSIONS AND FRUSTRATIONS WITHIN LIKUD. THIS SHARPENING DIVISION, WHICH ALSO AFFECTS THE INTERESTS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, COULD WELL SERVE AS AN ARGUMENT FOR SEPARATING THE TWO

ORGANIZATIONS. SINCE THE WZO DEPENDS FOR ITS BUDGET
LARGELY ON THE AGENCY, THIS MIGHT AT LEAST TEMPORARILY
UNDERMINE ITS ROLE, PARTICULARLY ABROAD.

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13. IN THE MEANTIME, THE COHESION AND INFLUENCE OF
THE AMERICAN JEWISH DELEGATIONS HAVE BEEN PLACED IN
JEOPARDY BY THE SUDDEN EXPOSE OF A MAJOR CONTROVERSY OVER
THE MANAGEMENT OF THE UNITED JEWISH APPEAL, PUBLISHED
FIRST IN HAARETZ OF FEBRAURY 17. THIS IS LIEKLY TO
AFFECT THE POSITIONS OF UJA CHAIRMAN STRELITZ, FUND
DIRECTOR BERNSTEIN, AND PRESIDENT LAUTENBERG, AS
WELL AS OF OTHER PROMINENT AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS.
ALTHOUGH THERE APPEARS TO BE NO QUESTION OF MALFEASANCE,
THE CRITICISM OF UJA MANAGEMENT FOR THE EXCESSIVE OVER-
HEAD AND THE PERSONALITY CONFLICTS UNDERLYING THESE CONTRO-
VERSIES MAY REDUCE FUND RAISING ABILITY AND POSSIBLY
LEAD TO A REDUCTION OF THE SHARE OF ITS CONTRIBUTIONS
GOING TO ISRAEL.

14. IN SUM, THE CONGRESS HAS OPENED UNDER A CLOUD
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OF DISSENSION AND CONTROVERSY. WE WILL REVIEW ITS
DELIBERATIONS AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING AND
WILL TRY TO ASSESS THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAELI
FOREIGN POLICY AND PARTICULARLY FOR US/ISRAELI RE-
LATIONS. LEWIS

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